CONSIDERATIONS

UPON THE

WHITE HERRING

AND

COD FISHERIES:

IN WHICH

The DESIGN of carrying on and improving them, in the Manner propoſed by a SOCIETY trading with a JOINT STOCK, is fully explained, and freed from all Objections.

Salus populi, ſuprema lex.

LONDON:

Printed for M. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Pater-Noſter-Row*, and ſold by the Bookſellers of LONDON and WESTMINSTER. 1749.

[Price Six-pence.]

CONSIDERATIONS

ON

The British White-Herring and Cod Fisheries.

THERE have been very few publick transactions for many years past, that have given more just or more general satisfaction to such as have the good of their country truly at heart, and who sincerely wish to see all the inhabitants of this island, put in a way of living happily and plentifully through the effects of their industry, or from the fruits of their labour, than the late glorious declaration of our representatives in parliament, "That the carrying on and improvement of the BRITISH White-Herring and Cod Fisheries, are of great importance to these kingdoms, as they may be of eminent advantage to the TRADE and NAVIGATION thereof; and may be a means of employing and providing for great numbers of industrious POOR, provided the same Fisheries be carried on by a large JOINT STOCK under proper regulations, and reasonable encouragements be given thereto."

But as we live in an age, when nothing is implicitely received, tho' supported by any authority whatever, so there have been, as it might be easily foreseen there would be, abundance of questions asked upon this subject, and particularly

CONSIDERATIONS

ON

The Britiſh White Herring and Cod Fiſheries.

THERE have been very few publick tranſactions for many years paſt, that have given more juſt, or more general ſatisfaction to ſuch as have the good of their country truly at heart, and who ſincerely wiſh to ſee all the inhabitants of this iſland, put in a way of living happily and plentifully through the effects of their induſtry, or from the fruits of their labour, than the late glorious declaration of our repreſentatives in parliament, "That the carrying on and improvement of the BRITISH White Herring and Cod Fiſheries, are of great importance to theſe kingdoms, as they may be of eminent advantage to the TRADE and NAVIGATION thereof; and may be a means of employing and providing for great numbers of induſtrious POOR, provided the ſame Fiſheries be carried on by a large JOINT STOCK under proper regulations, and reaſonable encouragements be given thereto."

But as we live in an age, when nothing is implicitely received, tho' ſupported by any authority whatever, ſo there have been, as it might be eaſily foreſeen there would be, abundance of queſtions asked upon this ſubject, and particularly

cularly three. First, Why, notwithſtanding the general prejudice againſt companies, it ſhould be thought requiſite to commit this national and important concern to the management of ſuch as ſhall engage in a JOINT STOCK? Secondly, Why, when this conceſſion is made, it becomes farther requiſite, to grant ſuch as engage in this joint ſtock an encouragement, ſince the profits ariſing from a trade ſeem to be both a natural and a ſufficient encouragement to proſecute it? And then, laſtly, the two former points being conceded, what moral certainty is there, that they ſhall produce the deſired effect, or that this company, ſo encouraged, ſhall procure to the nation ſettled and profitable White Herring and Cod Fiſheries? Theſe are the material queſtions that have been aſked upon this occaſion, and, it may be preſumed, that it will be conſidered as a ſervice done to the publick, to anſwer them in a ſatisfactory manner.

In anſwer to the firſt of theſe queſtions, it is to be conſidered, that the common prejudice againſt joint ſtocks, ariſes from a notion, that every company, trading with a joint ſtock, muſt be inveſted with excluſive privileges; and therefore, when it is known that the company intended to be erected for the great purpoſes now under our conſideration, is to be ſtiled the SOCIETY of the FREE BRITISH FISHERY, and to have no excluſive powers, it ſhould ſeem that any farther anſwer would be unneceſſary, the very foundation of this prejudice being taken away by the bare ſtating the true matter of fact. But in that caſe, perhaps, the queſtion might be varied, and it would be aſked, Why a joint ſtock,

and

and a joint ſtock eſtabliſhed by parliamentary authority, is a thing more requiſite now than heretofore, for the undertaking of this trade more than any other; or, here rather than in other countries, where it has been ſeen to thrive without the immediate or extraordinary interpoſition of the ſtate?

With reſpect to a joint ſtock being more neceſſary now than at any other time, it ought to be conſidered, that there is, and will be, a continual variation in things relative to the management of commerce; for the very ſame reaſon, that the like alteration happens to other ſublunary affairs. Governments alter, the manners and cuſtoms of nations change, and not only ſo, but their very intereſts likewiſe; we are not the ſame kind of people we were an hundred years ago, and this not barely in reſpect to the trifling circumſtances of dreſs and diſcourſe, but even as to things of far greater conſequence; and for theſe reaſons therefore, methods that would have been extremely fit in former times, in theſe would be impracticable at leaſt, perhaps ridiculous. On the other hand, methods, which in thoſe days would not only have been unneceſſary but criminal, may be indiſpenſibly requiſite in theſe, and therefore innocent.

We ſee plainly, that notwithſtanding the natural advantages, of which the inhabitants of this iſland are, and always were in poſſeſſion, we neither have, nor ever had, the White Herring and Cod Fiſheries to any remarkable degree of profit; on the contrary, our not poſſeſſing theſe Fiſheries, is, and has been the conſtant

ſtant object of wonder and regret. It was long ago ſuggeſted and believed, that the principal cauſe of this was, their not being carried on by a joint ſtock with proper encouragement; and therefore, though late, this would be a good argument for trying, whether by this means ſomething might not be done in favour of thoſe Fiſheries even now. The judgment of ſuch as have miſcarried in an undertaking is not to be deſpiſed, and the ſentiments of diſintereſted men deſerve ſtill greater regard. Both might be very eaſily brought to teſtify in favour of this method, as that which would bid fair to do what by no other method has been hitherto done.

We may go farther ſtill, and, without relying either upon probable arguments or poſitive authorities, we may bring to the view of every candid and impartial perſon the very cauſes themſelves, that render this method neceſſary in our times. Heretofore there were but two Intereſts in this kingdom, that of land, and that of trade. But there is now a third, which is the moneyed intereſt; and it is very evident, that, as no new trade can be entered upon without a very large expence, and more eſpecially a trade new to us, and old to others, who we muſt equal at leaſt, if not excel; and ſell as cheap, if not cheaper, to have a chance of ſucceeding. But this being the caſe, who is to furniſh the expence? not the landed intereſt, for they have not money; not the trading intereſt, for they have ways enough, at leaſt, for all the money they have. It remains then, that the moneyed intereſt furniſh this expence, or, at

leaſt,

leaſt, the greateſt part of it; but as they are unacquainted with trade, it is impoſſible, ſuppoſing their will ever ſo good, that they ſhould give their aſſiſtance in any other way, than this of a joint ſtock.

It is a very judicious obſervation of the great Lord Bacon, "That, when old men drawn to "themſelves the advantages ariſing from the "activity of young men under their direction, "great fortunes are attained." Something of the like kind happens here; for in ſuch a joint ſtock, though the bulk of the money comes from one intereſt, yet the execution of it is put into the hands of the other, and this turns to the mutual benefit of both. The trading part of the nation, how much ſoever convinced of the value and worth of a Fiſhery, would never venture to undertake it in any other way; and ſuch as have the whole, or the beſt part of their fortunes in money, would never be brought to run any riſk of this kind, but by ſuch a method where they are ſure of being entitled to all the ſkill of their trading partners, and of reaping all the advantages that ariſe from the manner in which they employ the money that is advanced. We have ſeen a great variety of inventions, to render the moneyed intereſt ſerviceable to the nation; but this invention is of a higher nature, for it enables them to be not only uſeful, but profitable to their country; and throws their wealth into that channel which wants it moſt, and from which the greateſt returns may ariſe.

The carrying on therefore the Britiſh Fiſhery by a joint ſtock, whatever it might be in

times

times paſt, is at this juncture highly expedient. That the White Herring and Cod Fiſheries ſtand more in need of ſuch an extraordinary ſupport, than almoſt any other new trade that could be propoſed, will appear from various conſiderations, ſome of which have been occaſionally mentioned already. If they could have been carried on to advantage, either by the induſtry of private undertakers, by aſſociations voluntarily entered into, and unſupported by authority, or even with the help of thoſe aſſiſtances, that have been from time to time afforded them by the publick, we ſhould long ago have been in poſſeſſion of them, and this too in their full extent; and the reaſon which induced the repreſentatives of the nation, to declare ſo fully in favour of this method, was becauſe it provides effectual remedies againſt all the known cauſes of former miſcarriages, at the ſame time that it furniſhes a ſtrength never yet exerted, and which appears to be entirely adequate to the end that is propoſed.

The ſuppoſition, that this trade was undertaken, and has been carried on in a neighbouring country with ſucceſs, and without the countenance or aſſiſtance of the government, is very far from being well founded. Whoever will look into the treatiſes that have been formerly written upon this ſubject, will find, that the good fortune of the Dutch is almoſt wholly aſcribed to their falling originally into this very method, and to their adhering to it conſtantly. The famous Penſionary de Witt, whoſe maxims, in reference to commerce, have been regarded as a kind of Oracles, and who was as far as any man

could

could be from admiring companies, declares in the clearest and most express terms, not only for such a method in carrying on Fisheries, but that they could be carried on in no other; for which reason, he very warmly recommends the establishing a college of Fisheries in each of the chambers in Holland, that this, which he affirms to be one of the four pillars of the state, might not be carried on at random, according to the particular schemes of men bent upon their private profit, but under such regulations as might preserve and continue it a national advantage. To therefore an appeal is made to experience, that of the Dutch is very decisive, and shews, that in this way these Fisheries may be carried on with as much success as can be wished; as on the other hand, our own experience unfortunately proves, that no other method, however plausible in appearance, has ever yet been found to answer in practice.

But suppose it had been otherways; suppose at the time that the Dutch originally entered upon these Fisheries, they had proceeded in an other manner, and had thriven by unauthorized joint stocks, to which men were invited promiscuously by the hopes of gain. This must have been in the infancy of their commonwealth, when the fortunes of most of their subjects were much upon a level, and when consequently none being very rich, numbers found it their interest to unite in fitting out Herring Busses, which would always bring much money even for private purses. This will prove nothing to the present purpose, and to our Nation, whose circumstances are quite a different appearance, for

the propensity to such an undertaking, and the skill requisite for managing of it, lies among one sett of People, while the money, which must support these, is in the hands of others, who have not either that propensity or skill; this shews to a demonstration the great excellency of that method, by which these two interests are united, not only without injury or inconvenience to either, but to the mutual satisfaction and advantage of both.

It is a thing so easily discerned, and has been so often explained and insisted upon, that the great profits of our trade in time of peace are the prime sources of our wealth, and thereby raise the value of our lands, that no body can form any doubts about it. On the other hand, in time of war the moneyed interest, has happily interposed to supply what was requisite for the publick service, and to support the credit of the nation. But this new method is a great improvement; it twists all these three interests into one strong cord, and opens a way for the moneyed men to merit as much from their country in time of peace as in war, and this too, with as great, one might say, without injury of truth, with much greater advantage to themselves. It would be no difficult thing to point out surprizing benefits, that may hereafter arise to these nations from this happy union.—— But let us confine ourselves to the proper subject of this discourse.

Besides the reasons already given, which fully remove whatever has the least colour of solidity in the suggestions to the prejudice of a joint stock, there are others, that very fully shew its propriety in the present case.

We

We know by repeated experience, how difficult it is in this, and indeed, in every free nation, to carry penal laws into execution. Yet, it is as well known, that the White Herring Fishery cannot be carried on to any advantage, but by a ſtrict and rigorous adherence to juſt and prudent regulations, without which it is impoſſible to manage it in a manner capable of eſtabliſhing the credit of the commodity abroad, as, without this, an extenſive ſale could never be expected, if we had no competitors in this branch of trade, much leſs, when it is a thing notorious, that not only the Dutch, but ſome other nations are in actual poſſeſſion of it.

These regulations, however, may be, and certainly will be, not only wiſely contrived, but effectually carried into execution, by the Society of the Free British Fishery, without the aſſiſtance of any other Law, than that which gives them being, and his Majeſty's letters patents, by which they are incorporated. They will ſettle the proper form and ſtructure of the veſſels to be employed, the juſt proportion between the fiſhermen and ſeamen, the nature, ſize, and juſt dimenſion of the nets, and whatever elſe is requiſite for the outfit. They will aſſign the proper times for ſailing, the places of rendezvous, the method of fiſhing, and whatever elſe regards the conduct of the voyage. They will be careful to inſtruct ſuch as are employed in their ſervice as to the choice of the ſalt, the true method of curing, the proper way of packing, and they will provide a ſufficient number of inſpectors to ſee that every thing is done purſuant to their directions before the com-

pany's ſeal or mark is put upon the caſk, which will quickly eſtabliſh their reputation in foreign markets, and, in a very ſhort ſpace of time, ſecure at leaſt a large proportion of the trade in Britiſh herrings to Britiſh ſubjects.

As it is abſurd and ridiculous, ever to hope that ſuch a Fiſhery ſhould ſucceed, independent of ſuch regulations, and a continual care of ſeeing them executed, ſo it is equally abſurd and ridiculous to flatter ourſelves with the hopes of ever ſeeing theſe ſettled, or carried into execution, but by a company. Their intereſt will engage them ſufficiently to care, circumſpection, and diligence, even in the moſt minute particulars; becauſe nothing but this can procure ſucceſs to their endeavours, and, with the bleſſing of GOD, enable them to carry on this important and national deſign with advantage and honour to themſelves, and to their country.

We may add to this, that as all beginnings are difficult, attended with extraordinary expence, impeded by numberleſs obſtacles, and requiring a vaſt variety of expedients; ſo nothing but ſuch a company can pretend to ſtruggle with, to furniſh ſupplies, and to procure the means of forcing a trade through all theſe diſadvantages, ſkilful perſons muſt be found, engaged and encouraged, not by temporary rewards, but by contracts for a length of time, and permanent ſettlements, which it is out of the power of private perſons to make; for let men be ever ſo rich, they are ſtill mortal, but contracts made with corporate bodies are not liable to theſe inconveniencies and uncertainties, and therefore a company, trading with a joint ſtock, may, and indeed

deed only can procure and fix such assistances as are requisite to establish, to raise, and to render such a Fishery flourishing.

The SOCIETY of the FREE BRITISH FISHERY, founded by the royal and supported by parliamentary authority, for the best and noblest purpose, the general benefit of the nation, will be always a great and respectable body, capable of protecting such as are in its service, and of procuring, from time to time, whatever helps may be necessary to remove unforeseen obstructions, that might prove unsurmountable to any private association, tho' the particular persons engaged in it had fortunes ever so affluent, or interests ever so extensive; for these would be still but private interests, whereas those of this SOCIETY are in trust for the publick. These arguments duly weighed and considered, without the addition of many more, and some of them very weighty, that might be offered, are certainly more than sufficient to overcome all prejudices, and to establish the reasonableness, as well as the necessity of erecting a company trading with a joint stock.

We come now to the second great question, which is the encouragement given to those who are to engage in this undertaking. With respect to this it may be enquired, why a design so promising should not be thought sufficient to support itself? Why the publick, more especially in its present circumstances, should be charged with a new burden, to induce private men to engage in a design for their own profits? and what equivalent is stipulated for the publick, in return for so great and so extraordinary a favour?

These

Theſe are queſtions that certainly deſerve to be anſwered, and to which it is as certain, that very full and ſatisfactory anſwers may be given.

As to the firſt point, if the reader will be pleaſed to recollect what has been already ſaid, of the great benefit that muſt ariſe to the nation, by uniting the moneyed in the ſame purſuit with the trading and landed intereſts, he will certainly agree, that there can be nothing more juſt or reaſonable, than to take any ſtep that ſhall appear indiſpenſibly neceſſary to the compaſſing a thing of ſo great moment. The higheſt reach of political prudence is to diſcover the ſhorteſt, ſafeſt, and moſt effectual means of accompliſhing the deſired end. When this is done, ſucceſs is not barely probable, but in a manner certain; and where it is not done, all is left doubtful and precarious. Theſe are plain and ſelf-evident maxims, and upon theſe this meaſure is founded.

The ſame dependence that landed men have upon their eſtates, and ſuch as are embarked in trade, have upon the profits of their commerce, thoſe people who are poſſeſſed of it place upon their money. In order to bring them therefore to give that neceſſary aſſiſtance, which is in this caſe expected from them, and which can be had from none elſe, it becomes requiſite to offer them the ſame certainty with reſpect to this, that has been always offered them, in order to engage them in other undertakings. Without this, it would be prepoſterous to think of inviting them, becauſe they have many ways open to diſpoſe of their money with the like encouragement, and conſequently from the fundamental prin-

principles of their conduct, they would, without this encouragement, moſt certainly reject ſuch an invitation.

As to the profits that may ariſe from the ſucceſs of this deſign, they muſt be thrown out of the queſtion, becauſe they are balanced by the riſk. To talk of giving an encouragement, to engage men to accept of profit, is a palpable abſurdity, but to encourage men to riſk their money, is a very reaſonable thing; indeed ſo very reaſonable a thing, that there is no foundation to expect they ſhould run ſuch a riſk without it. This, therefore, is the only means, by which that great and ſalutary meaſure of engaging the monied men to aſſiſt the trade of the nation in time of peace, as they aſſiſt the government in time of war, can ever be brought about, and therefore it ought to be taken.

That obſcurity, in which matters regarding the different intereſts ſubſiſting in this kingdom (to ſuch as have little conſidered them) is commonly involved, may be eaſily diſpelled, when things are fairly and honeſtly ſtated. Truth has an inſeparable ſplendour, that reveals and diſtinguiſhes all things, where it once appears; and however hard and difficult it may ſeem, to underſtand any complicated ſubject perfectly, yet, if it be fairly, and fully ſtated, the rational and impartial enquirer will very eaſily ſee to the bottom of it; indeed, if it were not ſo, there could be no ſuch thing as certainty in the world, and in matters of the higheſt importance, we muſt truſt to the humour of particular men, to chance, or to the turn of the times.

It

It is very true, that, in moſt diſcourſes relating to theſe political intereſts, things are very dark and perplexed, which frequently deters men of plain ſenſe, and honeſt meanings, from attempting to decide about them. But the reaſon of this is ſeldom the inability, but is commonly rather the bad intention of the writer, who, being willing to ſerve one of theſe intereſts, makes it his buſineſs to heighten every thing relating thereto, by all the aſſiſtances that his logick or rhetorick can afford; and, at the ſame time, to diminiſh and diſcredit the other two; and thus the perſpective of the piece being ſpoiled, the reader, between the falſe lights and the falſe ſhades, knows not what to make of it.

The deſign of this treatiſe is the very reverſe; all that is aimed at herein, is to do equal Juſtice to every one of theſe intereſts, and to ſhew how their union may prove uſeful to all the three; and therefore the reader needs not at all wonder at the clearneſs with which things are repreſented; for there is far leſs skill neceſſary to exhibit, than to conceal TRUTH.

All that is requiſite, in favour of this deſign, is to remove the wrong notions that party-prejudices and prepoſſeſſions have introduced, and to ſtate things as they really are; for, when this is once done, men of candour and impartiality cannot fail of conceiving them perfectly, or of ſeeing, that the thing in the world moſt to be wiſhed, for the quiet, ſafety, and welfare of Great Britain, is the reconciling theſe intereſts, and thereby begetting ſuch

ſuch an harmony, as may be ſtrictly and properly ſtiled a national coalition.

To grant therefore, in favour of this, the ſame encouragement to the monied intereſt, that has been always found requiſite, and therefore always thought reaſonable, in matters of leſs moment, ought not to be eſteemed ſingular and extraordinary; and therefore it may be fairly preſumed, that a full and ſatisfactory anſwer has been given to the firſt query upon this head, which, however, will receive additional ſtrength and weight, from what we ſhall have occaſion to advance, in reference to the other queries.

The ſecond of theſe is, why, under its preſent circumſtances, it ſhould be thought reaſonable to expect ſuch encouragement from the publick, ſince there is nothing more generally underſtood, and agreed, than that it ſtands rather in want of relief from burdens already impoſed, than in a condition of bearing any new weight upon what conſideration whatſoever?

When it has been once ſhewn, as in the preſent caſe it has been ſhewn to a degree of demonſtration, that this important branch of commerce can be no other way acquired, or managed, than by a company trading with a joint ſtock, that ſuch a company, with ſo large a capital as is requiſite, cannot, in the preſent ſtate of things, be formed without the aſſiſtance of the monied intereſt, and that, to procure this aſſiſtance, there is but one way; and that the ſame, taken in all caſes where ſuch aſſiſtance is required, the caſe is in a manner already decided; for there is nothing more left

to debate, but whether the public ought to avail itself of that aſſiſtance, and carry on a Fiſhery, or remain without it, and leave it in the hands of foreigners, which has been complained of ſo long. This, indeed, is putting the thing very ſtrong, but it is putting it fairly, and truely at the ſame time, and we ſhall only deceive ourſelves in putting it otherwiſe.

Yet, ſtrong as this is, there may be a great deal more ſaid, and that with equal truth, and ſupported by the cleareſt evidence. For this encouragement is not barely requiſite to invite the monied intereſt, but is abſolutely neceſſary to give a beginning to this deſign, even if it was poſſible to carry it on in any other method. In order to explain this, we muſt conſider, that no trade can be carried on ſucceſsfully againſt competitors in much eaſier circumſtances. If the ſubjects of one country are loaded with taxes, and the ſubjects of another country live under lighter taxes, it is evident, that the former cannot, with any probability of being gainers, undertake, in any branch of trade, to rival the latter. But it would be ſtill more unlikely, that ſuch a nation, ſo taxed, ſhould ever be able to wreſt out of the hands of a people, leſs heavily taxed, a trade, of which they had been long in poſſeſſion.

Now this is ſo far from being a ſuppoſed caſe, with reſpect to the White Herring Fiſhery, between us and the Dutch, that, in reality, the fact goes conſiderably beyond the ſuppoſition. There is no need of entering into a long and intricate enquiry, as to the taxes in one country, and the taxes in the other, or making a tedious compariſon between them, ſince it is ſufficient for our purpoſe to

to remark, that for the ſake of acquiring and preſerving the Herring Fiſhery, the Dutch have diſcharged the commodities, manufactures and proviſions, employed or conſumed in it, in a great meaſure, both from cuſtom and exciſe; ſo that to put our ſubjects upon a level with them in this reſpect, at leaſt till the trade can be abſolutely gained, we ought to grant them a like exemption, or a bounty equivalent to it.

This was long ago known and aſſented to, the reaſon of the thing being too ſtrong, and too clear, to admit of any doubt about it; and therefore, in all attempts that have been made to ſet up ſuch a Fiſhery, ſuch conceſſions have been offered to thoſe who were willing to embark in it, ſometimes by giving a certain ſum upon every Buſſe fitted out, and at others, upon every caſk of Herrings that was made; notwithſtanding which, for want of a joint ſtock, and the powers neceſſarily veſted in a company, theſe bounties never had the deſired effect; and conſequently, we have continued to regret the want of, but were never able to acquire the White Herring Fiſhery. This is a thing notorious to all who have made the leaſt enquiry into this buſineſs.

Thus then, this very encouragement which we have been hitherto pleading for, as a thing neceſſary to engage the monied intereſt to aſſiſt in forming a joint ſtock for the carrying on this Trade, is no new demand, but a thing that was always thought reaſonable, and which would have been previouſly ſtipulated, if there had never been any mention of a company and joint ſtock at all. Nay, more than all this, the very encouragement propoſed of four per cent. for undertaking this

trade

trade in a new way, and with far greater probability of ſucceſs, is not above a third of what was heretofore given to excite thoſe attempts that failed of ſucceſs. And ſurely, when this is known and conſidered, it is impoſſible that any one ſhould ſay, that ſuch encouragement is too much to give, or that the nation is impoſed upon in accepting a bargain upon two thirds better terms, than it was formerly by herſelf propoſed.

The circumſtances of the nation do not in the leaſt affect this encouragement. For, firſt, this is not given gratuitouſly, and ſo as never to be ſeen again, but is paid as a conſideration for a very important ſervice expected, and that too under ſuch reſtrictions, as that it is ſimply impoſſible the money ſhould be obtained as an encouragement, and the ſervice be neglected, which, however, was an inconvenience never ſufficiently guarded againſt by former methods of beſtowing bounties, and which perhaps never can be guarded againſt in any other way than that of a company trading with a joint ſtock. In the next place, it deſerves our attention, whether the circumſtances of the nation does not require, that ſhe ſhould rather give encouragement for the undertaking great and probable deſigns, for employing numbers of people, and thereby adding to her ſtock, which muſt render her affairs better; than thoſe deſigns, which, how well or wiſely ſoever calculated, tend only to prevent things from growing worſe.

But to come ſtill cloſer to the point. As this moderate encouragement, for ſo important a ſervice, is not a new demand, in truth, but a ſmall part of the old demand, whenever there were thoughts of entering in earneſt upon this buſineſs;

ſo

ſo if we will but look to the very bottom, it is ſcarce a demand at all, and tho' aſked and received as an encouragement, yet can be hardly reckoned a burden upon the publick in any degree whatever. For as the very ſetting the White Herring and Cod Fiſheries on foot muſt be attended with a very large expence, and as that will be increaſing for almoſt the whole time that it is propoſed this encouragement ſhall be given, and as a very large proportion of the money ſo laid out will neceſſarily be brought into the coffers of the public by cuſtoms and exciſes, the difference will be very little to the nation, and, upon the whole, will be only paying with their right hand to receive again with their left, that is, 'till the company has done its buſineſs, and put the nation in poſſeſſion of theſe Fiſheries, for by that time the encouragement will ceaſe, whereas the revenue ariſing from the Fiſhery will not barely continue, but be every day increaſing.

We may be permitted to ſay, that the laſt demand is, from this account, a little varied; for now it is thoroughly examined, and perfectly underſtood, this encouragement cannot be thought ſo great and ſo extraordinary a favour, but muſt be rather regarded as a juſt and reaſonable expedient; yet, without inſiſting, however, ſo poſitively as perhaps we might do upon this head, let us proceed to anſwer the demand, and to ſhew, that, whatever this encouragement may be, whether a very great, or a very moderate favour, it will be no act of profuſion, but the public will have not only a certain, but an ample equivalent.

The White Herring and Cod Fiſhery, if thoroughly eſtabliſhed, would tend greatly to the be-

neſt of the nation; for it would be an additional branch of commerce, employing a great number of hands, that are now idle (and, in that light, an evident and direct burthen upon the public) it would augment our ſhipping, increaſe the number of our ſeamen, and add to the general balance of trade, as it would enable us to export goods to a great value, which yet coſt us nothing but labour. Now theſe, which are all national advantages, muſt abſolutely accrue from the employment of the joint ſtock in carrying on theſe Fiſheries, whatever fate may accompany the company's deſign; for tho' they trade to profit or loſs, in reſpect to themſelves, the public is ſure to gain, provided they trade at all.

It is in the ſetting ſuch an undertaking on foot, that the great difficulty lies, and in keeping it on for a few years, in ſpite of any oppoſition or diſcouragements to which it may be expoſed, which have been too hard in times paſt for private endeavours, and which there is reaſon to fear would be always too hard for them. But in the hands of a company, and a company having nothing elſe to mind, ſure of the countenance and protection of the government, whenever occaſion ſhall require, and having all the great towns and ſeaports in the iſland united to her by intereſt, this will not be a work either impoſſible or impracticable; and the ſpace of ſeven years is long enough for our fiſhermen and ſeamen to make themſelves thoroughly acquainted with the buſineſs in all its branches.

Whatever therefore the event of this undertaking may be, with reſpect to thoſe concerned in the joint ſtock, after that period, the nation's

even equiva-

equivalent will remain ſecure. The Buſſes will continue to go to ſea in ſomebody's ſervice or other, and the Fiſhery will be effectually carried on in conſequence of this company's having been erected, whether it be carried on by the company, or not; which, for the reaſons that have been before aſſigned, will bring in a large annual revenue to the public; will ſupply, at any time, a conſiderable number of hardy and able ſeamen; and may afford occaſion for the ſetting up new manufactures, as well as open freſh branches of trade, of which it is impoſſible, at preſent, for us to have any foreſight. Such will be the NATION's ſhare in the White Herring and Cod Fiſheries.

Upon this free and fair enquiry into the nature and terms of the intended Fiſhery, we ſee plainly, it is not at all a ſcheme calculated to ſerve any private purpoſes, but for the public benefit, by propoſing an eaſy and equitable expedient for inducing ſuch as have a great part of their fortunes in ready money, to give their aſſiſtance to the nation, for obtaining a thing that has been long wiſhed for, often attempted, but could never be acquired; and this under the ſame conditions that they are, and have been content to embark in other affairs. In this caſe, it is the public that demands, and ſuch as are willing to take a ſhare in the joint ſtock, that afford aſſiſtance; it is the public that is to be the great and ſure gainer, and ſuch as are proprietors of the joint ſtock will be only adventurers. The more this ſpirit of improving the Fiſhery ſpreads, the more the profits of the public will be augmented; but thoſe of the company will not increaſe in the ſame proportion, becauſe they are not an excluſive company, and

even

even if they ſhould meet with ſpeedy and unexpected ſucceſs, this will ſerve only to excite that ſpirit in private merchants, which, it is plain, can be excited no other way, and will contribute thereby more to the public advantage than their own.

In dwelling ſo long upon this head, it is by no means intended to inſinuate, that the publick has too good a bargain, or that ſhe ought to bid more; but barely to wipe off ill grounded ſuſpicions, that no ſcheme is ever formed with a ſincere view to the nation's good, but that this is ſet up as a ſpecious and plauſible pretence to cover purpoſes of another nature, and which conſequently are not to be avowed. There is no queſtion, that this has been often, but it does not follow from thence, that this muſt be always the caſe. The very propoſal before us is a clear inſtance of the contrary; for in this, all the riſk is on the ſide of the individuals who embark in this joint ſtock; and all the ſure and certain advantages on that of the publick.

That this is as it ſhould be, is what we readily allow; that it is the duty of good citizens to endeavour, with ſome hazard to themſelves, to contribute to the ſervice of their country, is a thing not to be diſputed; but that, with reſpect to this deſign, the encouragement propoſed is in itſelf highly reaſonable; that it is in its proportion inconteſtably moderate, and that the publick has a certain and full equivalent for the neceſſary encouragement, is as plainly made out as the nature of the thing will bear. It is indeed fit that this ſhould be made out, and that all candid and competent judges ought to be made ſenſible of the truth of theſe aſſertions, and that for many rea-

ſons

ſons; but more eſpecially for this, that they may be fully convinced, notwithſtanding the common notions of degeneracy of the times, there ſtill remains a ſpirit amongſt us capable not only of aiming at great and worthy actions, but of deviſing proper means for accompliſhing thoſe intentions, by giving a right turn to the prevailing diſpoſition of mankind, and reconciling thereby concern for private intereſt to zeal for the publick ſervice.

We are now gradually advanced to the very laſt, but not the leaſt material queſtion of the three, viz. What moral certainty there is, that a company thus eſtabliſhed, and thus encouraged will be able to carry their point, and procure for this nation a ſucceſsful White Herring and Cod Fiſhery? If to this, we can give as clear and as concluſive an anſwer, as thoſe which have been given to the other queries, we ſhall have good reaſon to hope, that the declaration of our repreſentatives upon this ſubject will meet with general belief, and as univerſal applauſe, as the diſcovery of ſo important a truth, and ſo welcome an information as this ought to be, to all who have the welfare of their country ſincerely at heart, moſt certainly deſerves.

In the firſt place then, it is a point beyond queſtion, that the Dutch, who have been long in poſſeſſion of this Fiſhery, have themſelves magnified it highly, and have not been afraid to affirm, that it was of no leſs conſequence to them as a republick, than the American dominions of the king of Spain are to that monarch. The Grand Penſionary de Witt ſays, that manufactures, Fiſheries, traffick, and freight ſhips,

were the four pillars of the Dutch republick in his time. He computes, that the number of perſons maintained by manufactures were ſix hundred and fifty thouſand, and that four hundred and fifty thouſand were ſubſiſted by the Fiſheries. The computations on this ſubject, by our writers at that time, run indeed very high, yet they are tranſcribed and juſtified by de Witt; ſo that it is very far from being impracticable to come pretty near the truth, as to the produce of the Dutch Fiſhery in our ſeas, when in its flouriſhing condition, from whence we may form ſome judgment of what room there is for our eſtabliſhing an extenſive and profitable Fiſhery at preſent.

Towards the end of the preceeding and the beginning of the laſt century, the Dutch Herring Fiſhery was ſo diſtreſſed by the Dunkirkers, then ſubjects of the crown of Spain, that a tax was impoſed of a florin per laſt, in order to fit out and maintain a ſquadron ſufficient to protect the Herring Buſſes, and to block up the port of Dunkirk. This tax produced annually three hundred thouſand florins, and as the Herrings then ſold, from ten to twenty pounds ſterling a laſt, but generally about twelve pounds, the amount of their Herring Fiſhery might be well computed at three millions and a half of our money. It was at that time looked upon as certain, that the French, Embdeners, Bremeners, and Hamburghers, took all together about the ſame quantity of fiſh with the Dutch, ſo that our ſeas produced to foreigners, one year with another, between ſix and ſeven millions ſterling. It is indeed true, that the Dutch Fiſhery ſince that time is declined, but

to

to whatever cauſes this may be owing, it has never yet been ſuggeſted, that the quantity of fiſh in our ſeas is leſſened, or the demand for them ſunk; the contrary of the laſt is at this time generally allowed to be true, and that, provided the Herring be well cured, they would come now to as good a market as ever. So much for the value of this Fiſhery.

With reſpect to all the advantages that can be conceived in favour of theſe Fiſheries, we are not only upon a level with our neighbours, but have alſo a ſuperiority from the vicinity of our coaſts, from the variety and goodneſs of our ports, from the number of our people, every way capable of being employed in them. We have timber for building proper veſſels, we have all the conveniencies that can be deſired for equipping them; in ſhort, there is nothing neceſſary to our ſucceſs, in the management of theſe Fiſheries, but we either have, or might have, without any great difficulty. From hence, it is very plain, that our not ſucceeding hitherto, in any degree proportionable to what might be expected from the Poſſeſſion of ſuch advantages, has been owing, either to want of care, to want of diligence, to the want of due regulations, to the want of a ſufficient capital, or joint ſtock, and, finally, to the want of a proper authority, to guide, inſtruct, and inſpect the conduct of theſe Fiſheries. Theſe, and theſe alone, are and muſt be the cauſes of former miſcarriages.

The conſideration of theſe circumſtances ſufficiently prove the wiſdom and truth of the late declaration of our repreſentatives, "That the carrying on an improvement of the Britiſh White

"Her-

"Herring and Cod Fiſheries muſt be by a large "joint ſtock, under proper regulations, and rea- "ſonable encouragements to be given thereto." This would effectually enable us to avail ourſelves of all our natural advantages; and, at the ſame time, this would put it out of the power of our neighbours to diſtreſs or to defeat our endeavours, in ſo great and laudable a deſign, by underſelling, or undermining us, which they might always do, when they had to deal with private merchants, or even with any copartnerſhips that they were able to form.

Whatever is a national concern, as this moſt certainly is, and has been over and over by the higheſt authority declared to be, ought to be proſecuted in a national way, with that extent of power and of money, which is neceſſary to give it a proper weight and force, ſo as to overcome any kind of obſtacles whatever; and the longer this has been neglected, or delayed, the more reaſon there is, that, whenever it is attempted, it ſhould be attempted with a proper ſtrength. Whatever we do therefore in this reſpect, muſt be done with our might, and when we once ſhew, that we are in earneſt, and that we are reſolved to proſecute a ſcheme, that may be of eminent advantage to the trade and navigation of theſe kingdoms, and a means of employing, and providing for great numbers of induſtrious poor, in a way ſuitable to a work of ſuch conſequence, there is very little room to fear that we ſhall be diſappointed. That this has not been hitherto done, is ſo far from being a reaſon, that it never ſhould be done, that it is the very beſt reaſon that can be given for the contrary. Our neighbours have

ſucceeded, by making it a national concern, by attending to it carefully and conſtantly, by affording all the protection and encouragement poſſible to thoſe concerned in it, and by their government's valuing itſelf, as it had reaſon to do, upon the wiſdom and ſteadineſs of its conduct. The legiſlature has ſhewn a moſt laudable Inclination of the ſame kind, and there is no colour to apprehend it may not be followed by the like effects. We have gone as far as any other nation whatever in proſecuting deſigns much more difficult than this; and therefore it is idle and fooliſh, to deſpair of ſucceſs, where others have ſucceeded, and where the means by which they ſucceeded are moſt evidently in our hands.

The joy expreſſed upon this declaration, and the alacrity with which it was every where received, by ſuch as were moſt capable of judging of it, and moſt likely to take a ſhare in carrying the undertaking into execution, when it ſhall be brought to maturity, is a very favourable and happy omen of ſucceſs; to which, with like reaſon, we may add, the zeal and concern expreſſed by numbers of the moſt conſiderable men in the monied intereſt, who have teſtified the higheſt pleaſure at the thoughts of being able to contribute in this way, to promote a matter ſo extenſively advantageous to theſe kingdoms; which is a clear indication, that as a joint ſtock is the only proper method for carrying on and improving theſe fiſheries, ſo there will not be any difficulty in eſtabliſhing a company, every way capable of performing all that the letters patents for incorporating them ſhall require. Theſe are circumſtances that go a great way towards proving the moral certainty that

is

is desir'd of these concessions producing the desir-ed effects.

It deserves, likewise, our notice, that as there never was a more seasonable opportunity than this here at home, so there want not good grounds to expect, that it may be equally fortunate for re-ceiving assistance from abroad, since there never appeared in foreigners a greater propensity than at present, to vest their money in our funds; and as they are very capable of forming a right judg-ment of a project of this nature, it is far from be-ing improbable, that they will be inclined to take a large share early in a joint stock, that may in process of time become of much greater value, than persons less knowing in these matters can at present apprehend. This, besides the apparent advantage of bringing considerable sums into the kingdom, will also be attended with other advan-tageous consequences, and particularly that of attracting such as are well versed in the manage-ment of these Fisheries, and who from thence may propose to themselves a double benefit, by improving their small fortunes as proprietors; and by procuring farther advantages, by entering in-to the service of the company, and contributing that way to the success of an undertaking, which may very soon be put into a state equal to the most sanguine expectations. For we may look upon this as a certainty, that the outset of the com-pany will be very considerable, and that the prac-tice of a very few seasons, will excite such a spirit of activity and emulation, as cannot fail of giving an extraordinary turn to this affair, which only wants to be prosecuted with vigour, to shew how

eaſy it is for us to find a new Indies at our own doors.

It is certain, that though this may paſs for ſtrange news to ſome in this Iſland, from their want of acquaintance with matters of this kind; yet it would be very far from being thought ſo abroad, where the value of this Fiſhery is extremely well underſtood; and, which one would be glad not to add, our neglect of it alſo. There is a certain French writer, remarkable for his general acquaintance with every branch of commerce, and upon whoſe information the French miniſtry greatly relied, who does not ſcruple to affirm, that if the Herring caught by the natives of Scotland were cured with equal ſkill, and packed with as much care, they would be not only full as good, but even preferable in point of flavour to thoſe of Holland. If therefore, in theſe circumſtances only, we are deficient, moſt certainly under proper regulations we might very ſoon arrive at the higheſt perfection poſſible; and then there is no doubt, that our fiſh would come to an equal if not to a better market, eſpecially when the reputation of the Britiſh ſociety ſhall be thoroughly eſtabliſhed, and their mark upon the Herring cask become ſufficient ſecurity, that its contents are ſuitable to what that mark ſignifies.

There is indeed ſo little fear of ſucceeding in this matter, with the help of due care and under proper direction, that ſome of the northern nations have very lately entertained a project of ſetting up ſuch a Fiſhery, which is not only a plain proof that the thing is very practicable, but is alſo a clear inclination, that there is no doubt that the White Herring Fiſhery is as profitable as ever, from the new

markets

markets that have been opened of late years, and from others that might be opened, more eſpecially if that Fiſhery was thoroughly eſtabliſhed in the hands of Britiſh ſubjects. All this might be fully made appear, if it was a thing neceſſary, or even proper in this place; but what has been already ſaid is abundantly enough to our purpoſe; ſince it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that, with equal attention, we ſhould not be as able to carry on this Fiſhery as any other nation whatever; and it would be a very ſtrange thing indeed, if, notwithſtanding the declaration of parliament before-mentioned, and the general applauſe with which that declaration was received, we ſhould notwithſtanding ſuffer a thing of this importance to ſleep, till other ſtrangers, encouraged by our indolence or diffidence, ſhould interfere, and thereby increaſe the number of thoſe difficulties, that it is ſuppoſed we have to ſtruggle with already.

Let us then reject at once all ſuch idle fancies and ill grounded prejudices, as have hitherto hindered us from reaping thoſe advantages that nature ſeems to have deſigned for us; let us embrace, without any further delay, that method which the example of other nations ſhews us is the true method of rendering this Fiſhery ſucceſsful; that method which by neglecting ſo long has render'd all our other advantages uſeleſs, and the method which the legiſlature, by declaring ſo clearly in its favour, has pointed out as that alone which can be purſued for effectually improving theſe Fiſheries, and thereby employing the poor, augmenting our ſhipping, and encreaſing our trade. Or, if after all, there be any objections that have real weight, any doubts that have ſo much as a colour of foundation, or

any ſuppoſition that can with a ſhadow of argument be urged againſt this method, or againſt that plan that has been lately propoſed, let them be produced; that they may be examined in time, and that the ſpace which muſt neceſſarily interveen before this matter receives the ſanction, as well as approbation of the legiſlature, may be employed in a fair and candid diſcuſſion of them! In order to which, perhaps, it may not be amiſs to mention the only two that have been hitherto ſuggeſted, by ſuch as have made the deepeſt enquiry into this ſubject, with a view of bringing it to the ſtricteſt teſt poſſible.

The firſt of theſe is, that a company incorporated for carrying on theſe Fiſheries with a joint ſtock, and entitled in virtue of that joint ſtock to a certain annuity from the publick, under the title of encouragement, may poſſibly let the undertaking remain long dormant, or at leaſt carry it on in a faint and imperfect manner; and, if this ſhould be the caſe, then the erecting ſuch a company, would not only fail of anſwering the ends propoſed by it, but might alſo be attended with other ill conſequences, and, perhaps, prove a greater bar to the vigorous purſuit of theſe Fiſheries, than they have ever met with; or, at leaſt, prejudice any future projects better contrived, and which otherwiſe might have received publick aſſiſtance, and have been thereby rendered effectual and ſucceſsful.

We cannot but allow, that this objection is very plauſible, and, to ſpeak plainly, is highly worthy of notice; for it cannot be denied, that, according to the old and juſt maxim, the corruption of the beſt things become the worſt, and a company for

carrying on the White Herring and Cod Fishery supported by parliamentary authority, that should depart from its original institution, and become not really, but nominally only a fishing company, would be very injurious to the nation, and therefore we cannot sufficiently commend those who are desirous of guarding against any such evil, because this shews a sincere disposition to promote the national part of this design; that which alone is, and ought to be the object of every honest Briton's zeal and attention. We admire and applaud the declaration of parliament, not because it proposes erecting a new company, with a large joint stock; but because that is calculated for the improvement of Fisheries, which are of great importance to these kingdoms; and therefore there can be nothing more proper, than that we should strictly enquire into the Provisions made by this plan, for rendering such an abuse of their Powers utterly impracticable.

In the first place, it is worthy our observation, that the SOCIETY of the FREE BRITISH FISHERY is constituted for this single purpose; and as no other charge or employment whatsoever; so that it is absolutely impossible for such as are entrusted with the direction of the society's affairs, to employ themselves any other way, than in that expected from them by the publick, and which will be prescribed to them by their charter. If indeed this society had been erected for other purposes as well as this, there might have been some danger with respect to carrying on the Fishery; because that, more especially at the beginning, will most certainly require the utmost attention, and the entire application of

this

this board; and therefore, the wisdom of our repreſentatives is as much to be admired, as their public ſpirit is to be applauded for aſſigning a joint ſtock, and as it were a ſelect council, for the carrying on and improving theſe important Fiſheries. By this means, they have ſtruck at the root of this objection, and by leaving the ſociety nothing to do but to direct, manage, and carry on the Fiſhery, have put it in the power of the whole nation to judge of the rectitude of their conduct, ſince they have no other choice, but to do what they ought, or to do nothing.

As this was the ſtrongeſt check that could be invented, in reference to the conſtitution of a company entruſted with the management of a large joint ſtock; ſo, in regard to the encouragement given by the public, we ſhall find the like care has been taken. For, firſt, the whole capital of the company is to be paid into, and ſecured in the bank of England; next, a very large proportion of it is to be employed in trade; and thirdly, this is to be done within a limited time, in order to intitle the ſociety of the free Britiſh Fiſhery to that encouragement which has been ſo often mentioned; and, when theſe particulars are ſeriouſly weighed, it will be evident to every candid and impartial perſon, that the wit of man cannot deviſe more effectual methods than theſe, for compaſſing the end which is aimed at by them; more eſpecially, when we likeways call to our remembrance the proviſo which is added, That, for the manifeſtation of the ſum ſo employed, the accounts of the ſociety ſhall be annually laid before parliament, together with ſuch vouchers and certificates of the truth

thereof,

thereof, as ſhall be directed by the letters patents, whereby the ſociety is incorporated.

There is yet another circumſtance to be taken notice of, before we leave this ſubject. We have ſhewn, from the care taken in the conſtitution of this ſociety, that the root of the objection is ſtruck at. From the circumſpection with which the public encouragement is guarded, it appears, that this root is torn up; but that is not all, for care is likeways taken, that it never ſhall be planted in ſucceeding times. The proviſion made in this plan, for extending the advantages of it to all the ports in the iſland, that ſhall be willing to embrace it, is a contrivance, that puts it entirely and for ever out of the company's power to ſlacken their diligence in the proſecution of the Fiſheries; ſuppoſing that, which is highly improbable, it ſhould enter into their thoughts or intentions. Each of thoſe chambers, agreeable to the famous De Witt's ſcheme, is to have its college, as he calls it, or, as we phraſe it, committee of Fiſheries, in which all the powers of the company, with reſpect to the actual execution of this deſign, will be veſted; and to fancy that a ſpirit of indolence and inactivity ſhould diffuſe itſelf, not only through the ſociety, but through all theſe diſtinct and ſeparate branches, is certainly a very idle and fooliſh fancy; more eſpecially, when it is conſidered, that theſe chambers are no corporations; that not only the inhabitants of a ſea port, but all the gentlemen, and ſubſtantial traders in its neighbourhood, are at full liberty to ſubſcribe, and, in virtue of their ſubſcriptions, have the choice of their own managers, may diſplace them

whenever they are diſſatisfied with them, or may ſell out their own ſtock, and ſubſcribe again into another chamber, the management of which pleaſes them better. Taking all this together, we cannot but ſee here is full proviſion made for the due execution of this deſign, ſo long as there is either a general ſpirit of induſtry prevailing in this iſland, or in any part or port of this iſland; and a proviſion beyond this, one may have leave to ſay, the legiſlature itſelf could hardly make.

There are few kinds of pleaſure ſo exquiſite, as that which ariſes from the explaining and defending truth, and when one is happy enough to be thus engaged, objections are ſo far from giving any concern or trouble, that, on the contrary, they ſerve only to afford freſh opportunities of diſtinguiſhing or pointing out thoſe excellencies in the object, which might have been overlooked in a ſuperficial or general view. It was the ſenſe of this, joined to that of the importance of the ſubject, that ſo ſtrongly recommended the care of doing it juſtice, and of conſidering it in almoſt every poſſible light, that there might be no doubt left of this propoſal's being as much calculated for ſafety, facility, and ſucceſs in its execution, as in its ſubſtance it is directed to the public utility and advantage. To compleat this deſign, there remains but one formidable objection more, which ſhall be ſtated and anſwered.

This objection is the very reverſe of the former, ſince it proceeds on this foundation, that poſſibly the company, animated, in proceſs of time, by extraordinary ſucceſs, and ſuſtained by that increaſe of influence and power, that

from

from ſuch ſucceſs muſt neceſſarily ariſe, may poſſibly digreſs from its original inſtitution, and be become a monopoly, equally dangerous and injurious to the general intereſt of the nation, and to the particular induſtry of the inhabitants of thoſe parts of the iſland moſt commodiouſly ſituated for carrying on the White Herring and Cod Fiſheries, in caſe no ſuch company ſubſiſted. An objection, for which if there were the leaſt grounds, we muſt allow, that it would have very great weight; and, this notwithſtanding that it muſt ariſe from the company's perfecting their deſign, triumphing over all obſtacles, and being in full poſſeſſion of an extenſive and profitable Fiſhery; which, however conducted, muſt be a national benefit, and that in a very high degree.

As to this point, there can be nothing clearer, than that a company trading with a joint ſtock, but without excluſive powers, can ever become a monopoly. If in the courſe of a few years, which indeed is a thing highly likely to happen, the ſociety of the free Britiſh Fiſhery, ſhould make a great progreſs in this trade, and convince the world, by experience, that a White Herring and Cod Fiſhery may be, not only as well, but better managed by Britiſh ſubjects, than thoſe of any other nation, there is no doubt, that this might excite a great number of private perſons to think of embarking in a Fiſhery now delivered from thoſe inconveniencies which had before rendered it impracticable for private perſons to engage in. This, ſuppoſing them ſo inclined, the company could not prevent. The independent traders would have the benefit of

all

all their improvements, and if, by the care and diligence of the perſons they employed, their Herrings were as well cured, and packed, as thoſe of the company, there is no doubt, but they would come to as good a market; but if the company's Herrings ſhould be more carefully cured and packed, any preference ariſing from thence will redound to the reputation of the company, and to that of the nation alſo, but without creating any thing like a monopoly.

We are next to conſider, that the admirable contrivance in this bill, for extending the benefits of the joint ſtock, and of all the advantages ariſing from the wiſe regulations of the ſociety, to every port in this iſland, that ſhall be inclined to embrace them, is ſuch a proviſion againſt a monopoly, as can never be eluded, and ought therefore to be conſidered, as the moſt generous and publick ſpirited conſtitution that could be invented. By this means, all the CHAMBERS that ſhall be erected, in purſuance of this plan, will be ſo many diſtinct and different companies, acting under the direction of perſons entirely free from any influence of the ſociety, that can be in the leaſt prejudicial to their particular intereſts; and therefore, there is no room to doubt, that, when this deſign comes to be carried into execution, it will have a moſt happy effect, as well in augmenting the commerce of thoſe parts that are already in a good condition, as in reviving and reſtoring thoſe, that, from a variety of accidents, have ſunk into decay.

That this, amongſt many other good conſequences, that muſt certainly follow from the ſucceſs

ters of this design, would be vastly beneficial to the nation, and have a direct tendency to heighten the power of Great Britain, will manifestly appear, if we consider the principles upon which our ancestors acted, in erecting the sea-ports upon our coasts into corporations, endowed with various privileges and immunities, which were certainly calculated for the publick benefit, as well as the private emolument of the inhabitants; and though, in length of time, these may be, in a great measure, effaced from memory, yet a moderate degree of attention to the nature of things, and to the facts that are still extant in our records, will suffice to recover them, so far as to convince us fully of the truth of what has been asserted, and oblige us to consider this, in the light of a thing very important. For it is impossible to devise a more natural, or more effectual defence for an island, than to have its coasts covered, and guarded by towns well inhabited, and that too, by persons of considerable property, and consequently equally capable, and inclined to exert their utmost force, for their own preservation, against foreign invaders. These, no doubt, were the primary motives to those indulgencies before mentioned, as might be proved by a variety of historical testimonies, if the thing did not so clearly speak itself.

The old charters of the cinque ports furnish a fine abundant evidence of this. The representatives they sent to parliament had the title of barons, and have so still, and at the coronation of our kings, they claim, and are allowed to support the canopy, which was an

emblematical device, according to the manners of those times, signifying, that they undertook to cover and protect the sea-coasts of their country, as in that ceremony they supported the covering of the crown upon the royal head. This distinction was due to those ports, as they fronted the French coasts, and, being most exposed, were consequently under the strongest obligations, to be always in a condition to act for their own defence, which while they were able to do, the interior part of the country was ever secure. How expedient it might be to revive this policy, and to provide, in so plain and easy a method, for the protection of our extended coasts, may well deserve consideration even in these times; inasmuch as this, without any additional charge or expence, might secure us from the fear of any depredations in time of war, by small vessels escaping our fleets, and deliver us from the necessity of dividing regular troops, to provide for the defence of a multitude of places.

We may add to these other apparent and sensible advantages, such as the breeding a numerous race of hardy, active, and able seamen and fishermen in all these ports, who, by their labour in time of peace, will be able to maintain and support themselves and their families, and be always at hand to man the royal navy in time of war, without difficulty or trouble, and for which, in this plan, there is also a wise and prudent provision. This will be such an easy, and, at the same time, effectual addition to our naval force, as must be very acceptable to those, who duly consider, how much our

ſafety and proſperity depends upon the increaſe of our maritime power; and conſequently, how great attention is due to every propoſal for a reaſonable and practicable improvement of it.

We ought likewiſe to reflect, that, from the great latitude left, in the manner of erecting theſe chambers, it will not be barely the inhabitants of theſe ſea ports, but all who live in the vicinity of them, and ſuch as reſide in the great towns, connected with them by the intercourſe of trade and manufactures, that may enter into, and become ſharers of theſe advantages, ſo that there can be hardly any ports ſo decayed, and inconſiderable, as to be out of the reach of this proviſion, to which, all who have any relation thereto, in any capacity whatever, may find their account in contributing, and ſo lay the foundation of their intereſt in ſuch places, upon the ſolid and national baſis of promoting their proſperity.

When theſe methods, which are now only in intention, ſhall come to be carried into act, it is eaſy to foreſee, what a ſpirit it will raiſe; A ſpirit, not of party or faction, but of activity and induſtry, an emulation in proſecuting honeſt and uſeful eſtabliſhments, which will ſupply the poor with work, and enable them to provide for their own ſubſiſtence, and thereby diminiſh the burden of rates, in places where they are moſt heavily felt at preſent; eſtabliſhments daily productive of new advantages, and which, it may be rationally hoped, will afford us openings to manufactures, with which we are yet unacquainted, to markets that we have not hitherto viſited, and to freſh

branches

branches of commerce, that have been hitherto unthought of, and unforeseen. These were the consequences that attended the fixing, encouraging, and extending these Fisheries in other countries, and which, therefore, will naturally follow from the adopting this only effectual method of establishing and improving these Fisheries here, the great sources of industry, and wealth in time of peace, and of invincible naval force, when, in the glorious cause of defending our own and Europe's liberties, we are constrained to take up arms.

As all these advantages will very speedily follow the establishment of the White Herring and Cod Fishery, in every port that embraces this proposal; as the number of Busses will gradually increase every season; and as every Busse that is employed, will give bread to one hundred and sixty persons on board, and on shore; so the advantages lying entirely in the power of the chamber to preserve and augment, and thereby their own profits, it is easy to discern, that every chamber is, in this respect, a check upon the society, as well as in the other, and will render it equally impracticable to defeat the intentions of the legislature, by doing nothing, or nothing but for their own profit, considered in their corporate capacity.

These considerations upon the import of the declaration, and upon the nature of the plan, will, in some measure, open the meaning of both, to those who have not time to examine them so closely, or an opportunity of making themselves so much masters of the subject, as to enter into the true scope and design of its several clauses and

and that this has been done in a very plain and artleſs manner, without calling in the aſſiſtance of a pompous ſtile or fine language, may, perhaps, render it more uſeful to thoſe for whoſe benefit it was intended, and ſo anſwer the end for which it was wrote; not of exalting and magnifying this propoſal, but render it thoroughly and perfectly underſtood; ſo that it may appear what it realy is, A SCHEME calculated for turning the natural concern for private intereſt to publick advantage, and conciliating the views of particular perſons, with the real and important intereſts of the whole NATION.

It will appear from the abſtract of the bill annexed, that all, which has been ſaid in this diſcourſe, is perfectly agreeable to the ſenſe of thoſe true and wiſe PATRIOTS, by whom this project was formed, and who have thereby ſo highly merited from their country in general, and the trading intereſt in this iſland in particular. It remains only, that in the receſs of parliament, ſuch as are moſt capable of entering fully into this matter, and promoting that ſpirit, which is neceſſary to carry ſo great a work as effectually into execution, as it has been prudently and happily contrived, will exert their honeſt and hearty endeavours for this ſalutary purpoſe; ſince, from the hint given in his Majeſty's moſt gracious ſpeech from the throne, we have the ſtrongeſt reaſon to expect, what in the laſt ſeſſion was propoſed, will be perfected in the next, and receive the ſanction of the legiſlative power.

All will then depend upon the diligence and induſtry of thoſe, who in their ſeveral ſtations ſhall apply themſelves to the proſecution of this

good

good deſign, ſo apparently calculated to the moſt valuable and deſirable purpoſes, for vindicating our juſt rights to the Fiſhery in our own Seas, and thereby employing the poor, and affording the rich an opportunity of increaſing their own, together with the wealth of the nation.

That all this may be done, and that the method by which it is now propoſed to be done, carries in it the higheſt probability of being ſucceſsful, has been fully ſhewn; and that, with the BLESSING of GOD, this noble undertaking ſo long wiſhed for, and at this juncture ſo much wanted, may be at length gloriouſly accompliſhed for the univerſal advantage of the Britiſh people, ought to be the ſincere endeavour, and the indefatigable ſtudy, as well as the zealous and ardent prayer of every good citizen, who has a due concern for the intereſt, ſafety, and welfare of his native country.

ABSTRACT of a BILL for the encouragement of the British White Herring and Cod Fisheries.

WHereas the carrying on and improvement of the British White Herring and the Cod Fisheries are of great importance to these kingdoms, as they may be of eminent advantage to the trade and navigation thereof, and may be a means of employing and providing for great numbers of industrious poor, provided the same Fisheries be carried on by a large joint stock under proper regulations, and reasonable encouragement be given thereto:

Therefore, for the encouragement of such persons as are willing to carry on the said Fisheries, and for the better regulation of the said trade, and for preventing frauds and impositions in the management thereof; Be it enacted,

By the KING's most excellent MAJESTY, By and with the advice and consent of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and commons in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That it shall and may be lawful for his Majesty, his heirs and successors, by letters patents under the great seal of Great Britain, to incorporate * and all and every person and persons, bodies politick and corporate, who in their own right, or as executors, administrators, successors, or assigns derived or to be derived from, by, or under the original proprietors at any time or times here-

* The names of the first members of the new corporation to be inserted here.

hereafter, shall have, and be entitled to any part, share, or interest, of or in the capital sum of † herein after-mentioned, so long as they respectively shall have any such part, share, or interest therein, to be one body politick or corporate in deed and in name, and by the name of The Society of the Free British Fishery; and by that name to have a perpetual succession, and a common seal, with power from time to time to chuse their Governor, President, Vice-president, Assistants, and other officers, in such manner, and under such qualifications, as to the electors and elected, as shall be directed in such letters patents; the first Governor, President, Vice-president, and Assistants, being so qualified, as all subsequent Governors, Presidents, Vice-presidents, and Assistants, shall be qualified; and to continue in their respective offices for the space of ‡ from the date of the said letters patents.

And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that it shall and may be lawful to, and for his Majesty, his heirs, and successors, by the said letters patents of incorporation, to impower the said society to make by-laws, from time to time, for the regulation and government of the said society; and for the regulation and management of the said trade and commerce which shall be carried on by them, and for the curing, sorting and packing White Herrings and Cod taken by the said society, in such manner as effectually to secure the credit of the said commodities in

† It was proposed to fill up this blank with five hundred thousand pounds.

‡ Suppose this blank filled up with one year.

* The names of the first members of the new corporation

foreign

foreign markets; and for the government of the ſervants of, and others employed by, the ſaid ſociety in the ſaid Fiſheries; ſo as ſuch by-laws be approved by*

within the ſpace of †

after the ſame ſhall be ſo made.

And be it further enacted, that it ſhall be lawful for the ſaid ſociety, from time to time, to direct what ſeals or marks they ſhall think proper to be put on all or every barrel or cask of Fiſh which ſhall be taken by them: And that if, any perſon or perſons whatſoever ſhall counterfeit ſuch ſeal or mark, and affix the ſeal to any barrel or cask of Fiſh not taken by the ſaid ſociety, every ſuch perſon ſhall ‡

And be it further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that in caſe any officer or ſervant employed by the ſaid ſociety, ſhall neglect or refuſe to account with the ſaid ſociety for any money entruſted with them by the ſaid ſociety, or ſhall neglect or refuſe to produce any papers, books, vouchers, or any other effects whatſoever, which he or they ſhall be entruſted with, by or on account of the ſaid ſociety; that it ſhall and may be lawful for any two or more of his Majeſty's juſtices of the peace of the county, liberty, or franchiſe, where ſuch ſervant ſhall be found, on complaint made on the part of the ſaid ſociety, to commit any ſuch officer or ſervant, without bail or mainprize, until he hath made a true

* It was propoſed to add the Lord high chancellor, either of the Lords chief juſtices, Lord chief baron, or two judges.

† Three months.

‡ Here the penalty to be aſſigned by wiſdom of parliament.

account,

account, and ſatisfied and paid ſo much as upon the ſaid account ſhall be remaining in his or her hands, and has delivered up to the ſaid ſociety ſuch papers, books, vouchers, or other effects.

And be it further enacted, that it ſhall be lawful for his Majeſty, his heirs and ſucceſſors, by the ſaid letters patents, to impower the ſaid ſociety to raiſe, by voluntary ſubſcription, the ſum of * which ſaid ſum, when ſo ſubſcribed, ſhall be the capital ſtock of the ſaid ſociety, and to direct how the property of the perſons ſubſcribing may be aſcertained and transferred, or aliened.

And be it further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that it ſhall and may be lawful to his Majeſty, his heirs and ſucceſſors, by his ſaid letters patents, to impower the ſaid ſociety, or ſuch part thereof as ſhall, in the ſaid letters patents, be for that purpoſe named, to make calls, and direct the payment of any part of the ſaid ſum of † which any perſon ſhall ſubſcribe towards carrying on the ſaid undertaking, at ſuch times as the ſaid ſociety, or ſuch part thereof as ſhall be for that purpoſe named, ſhall direct and appoint; ſo as the firſt payment directed to be made ſhall be made within the ſpace of days from the time of ſuch ſubſcription, and be after the rate of of the whole ſum ſubſcribed; and ſo as the ſecond payment be after the rate of of the ſum ſubſcribed; and that the laſt payment be of the remaining of the money ſo ſubſcribed.

* Five hundred thouſand pounds.
† The ſame.

Provided alſo, that all ſuch money, which ſhall be ſo ſubſcribed, and directed to be paid, ſhall be paid into the bank of England.

And be it further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that for an encouragement to ſuch perſons as ſhall become ſubſcribers to the ſaid joint ſtock for carrying on the ſaid Fiſheries, that,

Provided nevertheleſs, That the ſaid ſociety ſhall employ the Sum of † at leaſt in the ſaid Fiſheries, within the ſpace of ‡ months after the date of ſuch ſubſcription; and that, for the manifeſtation of the ſums which ſhall be ſo employed by the ſaid ſociety, the accounts of the ſaid ſociety ſhall be annually laid before parliament, together with ſuch vouchers and certificates of the truth thereof, as ſhall be directed by the ſaid letters patents.

And be it further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, That it ſhall and may be lawful for his Majeſty, his heirs and ſucceſſors, by the ſaid letters patents, to impower the ſaid ſociety to agree with any perſons, being ſubjects of Great Britain, under the name of the chamber of any city, town, or other place in Great Britain, who ſhall ſubſcribe the Sum of ‖ or upwards, to the ſaid joint ſtock, to carry on the ſaid Fiſhery on their own account of profit and loſs, under ſuch regulations, nevertheleſs, and reſtrictions, as his Majeſty, by his ſaid letters patents, ſhall direct; and that ſuch chambers may have credit with the ſaid ſociety, for

† Propoſed four per cent.
‡ Propoſed one hundred thouſand pounds.
Fourteen months.
‖ Propoſed ten thouſand pounds.

ſuch

which part of the ſums ſubſcribed by them to-wards the ſaid joint ſtock, as they have actually paid into the bank on account of the ſaid ſociety, ſubject nevertheleſs to ſuch deductions thereout, for the expence of carrying on the ſaid joint undertaking, as ſhall be regulated in ſuch agreement.

Provided alſo, that ſuch chambers, which ſhall trade on their own account, ſhall not have any profit arising from the trade of the ſaid ſociety, except the intereſt of the ſums reſpectively by them ſo ſubſcribed and paid, as aforeſaid, which intereſt ſhall be paid them after the rate of

And be it further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that from and after the time the ſaid ſociety ſhall be ſo incorporated by his Majeſty's letters patents, it ſhall and may be lawful for the Lord high admiral of Great Britain, or for the Lords commiſſioners of admiralty for the time being, by warrant under his or their hands and ſeals to the ſaid ſociety to be directed, to require the ſaid ſociety to produce, for his Majeſty's ſea ſervice, at ſuch time as he or they ſhall require, any number of men, not exceeding the proportion of men for every Buſſe employed by the ſaid ſociety in the ſaid Fiſheries, for which men ſo provided, the ſaid ſociety ſhall not be intitled to receive more than the ſum of for every men; and ſo in proportion for a greater number.

Provided alſo, that nothing in this act ſhall be conſtrued to extend to exclude any of his Majeſty's ſubjects, who ſhall not be members of, or employed by, the ſaid ſociety, from fiſhing, or carrying on the White Herring or Cod Fiſheries, in ſuch

manner

manner as they might have done, in caſe this act had never been made.

And be it further enacted, that this act ſhall be a publick act, and be ſo deemed and taken to be; and ſhall and may, in all caſes, be given in evidence on the general iſſue, and not be ſpecially pleaded.

FINIS.

314946